

THE LIFE AND WORK OF
WILLIAM TINDALE

BY

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To
A. M. C.
and
C. C. C.

**“A seed is sown in Britain and whether men wait
for a hundred or a thousand years they will find
it flowering.”**

(King Arthur).

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE author is gratified at the cordial reception which the first edition of his work has met with. The issue of a second edition has given the opportunity of making some minor corrections, and of including in the closing paragraphs an appreciative reference to the work of the American Bible Society.

Contemplation of the published work has suggested to the author that greater significance might have been attributed to the background and environment of Tindale's early manhood. The breaking up of the social and religious structure of his time, and the spread of the New Learning over Western Europe were events profoundly affecting the character and career of contemporary English youth. Thus, the disintegration and dissolution of the overawing authority of the Church, though she retained for decades sufficient

power to strike down her foes; the splintered social unity which resulted from the decadence of the Feudal Order, with class suspicion and hatred ensuing, combined to throw men off their moral balance: and then into this moral confusion came rumours of literatures, unknown and ancient, which opened to the startled minds of teachers and students knowledge that at once widened and made more wondrous the world which men thought they knew. The discovery of the Greek and Latin literatures excited the imaginations of the younger men. Oxford and Cambridge students in groups crossed the English Channel and enrolled themselves in the Continental Universities that they might gain at first hand the knowledge they desired. Grocyn, Linacre, and Colet came back eager to teach and guide. But most significant of all was this, that Erasmus landed in England.

Romantic stories were in the air of a New World beyond the seas.

Now the reaction of all this on the nation at large was a disquietude and disturbance that led confusion towards fear and panic.

Such was the atmosphere which as a youth Tindale breathed. Not the least of his claims to greatness are his deep insight into that disturbance of the national soul, and the adventurous confidence with which he entered on that long self-discipline which fitted him for the enterprise he so brilliantly fulfilled.

When four hundred years ago the Low Countries of Europe, Holland and Belgium, passed by inheritance to the reigning Spanish Sovereign, Charles I, these lands became the theatre of long and devastating warfare. Siege and sally, slaughter and suffering brought misery on the people like a flood.

Yet it was in that distracted country, amid suffering almost universal, that there came into being the unrivalled sweetness of belfry music. Singing towers all over the Netherlands sprang into the air. Carillons by the score were hung, and have been the delight and pride of the people for a dozen generations or more.

To much the same effect, we may say, out of the disquietude and suffering of those early years of the Sixteenth Century there

came in our English tongue a work which has proved to be “the most majestic thing in our literature, the most living spiritual thing in our tradition”; and we owe it to this high-hearted Apostle of our Faith, William Tindale.

APRIL, 1925.

PREFACE

WITH the approach of the Fourth Centenary there is a demand for a memoir of Tindale, less detailed than the standard biography, yet preserving the perspective of history. To meet this demand this miniature has been prepared. It sets forth especially the ardent force of vision which sustained the exile in the depth and tumult of his toil.

Diligent use has been made of recognized authorities on the subject treated; and it is hoped the little volume may make room for itself in this busy age. For helpful suggestions, the author is indebted to Mr. A. M. Denovan and Mr. B. R. Brooker; and to the Religious Tract Society for kind permission to reproduce illustrations from their standard Biography of Tindale.

It is offered to the public under the tolerant aphorism: "So long as a man says sincerely what he thinks, he tells us something worth while."



WILLIAM TINDALE

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INTRODUCTION

“**T**HE first scholar and the first divine of his epoch”—the words stand true of William Tindale; but his personality is even more arresting, for only a man richly endowed with courage, sincerity, uprightness, the sense of duty and the love of country, could have served England so nobly as he did: yet England knows not the man.

Fifteen years, or sixteen at most, early in the Sixteenth Century, 1520-1536, enclose the immemorial labors of William Tindale. During that decade and a half there were for him experiences and enterprises which went to the making of the man, and show what manner of man he was: but which also set him forth as one of the greatest of his race.

Formative years preceded these; some thirty of them one conjectures; of which, however, we can discover little. We get

glimpses of him and his doings; but they are like flashes of lightning in a dark sky. A narrative of this man's life would seem forever impossible: what letters there were, or other documents, disappeared long ago: and the path he trod with unfaltering step we can trace in patches only.

For all that it is possible to set out the features of the man, realize the massive qualities he possessed, recall his surroundings, the atmosphere he breathed, the hostility he aroused, the victory he won at the cost of his life; and so to recognize the valor, the magnanimity, and in a word the greatness of this too little known English worthy.

A biographic blank like this, where incidents of consequence must have transpired, is not altogether unknown in history.

History encounters the same difficulty in the life of Wyclif. The character of his parents is unknown. Not an anecdote of his boyhood remains. His life at Oxford, extending over forty years, yields but a single incident.

In one of Tindale's younger contempo-

raries in the northern kingdom, there occurs a similar desert stretch, where the silence is even more profound; and which the most diligent research has failed to break. John Knox was born in 1505; and of his inner life for the first forty years we know absolutely nothing. Then suddenly, against a background darker in Scotland than that in England, he emerges holding George Wishart's two-edged sword in his hand.

Of the crisis which lay behind, which changed him from a priest before the altar to the beloved disciple of this early martyr, we hear not a word. "In the solemn days of early faith", wrote the late Taylor Innes, "not a few men like him were in the desert until the time of their showing unto Israel. Not the polished shaft only, but the rough spear-head too was in the shadow of a mighty hand until the day when it was launched."

If ever Papini's paradoxical dictum be credible, it is in a life like this: "The most highly educational biographies are those of men of whom little or nothing is known.

Those are the books that set forth the human ideal, that tell us what a man ought to be." The paradox is elsewhere resolved by him when he says: "I care less for the whole course of a man's life than for his own distilling of its essence."

The distilled essence of Tindale's life comes to view again and again during these brief years; which were crowded with events, dramatic and of age-long significance, and which passed from drama to tragedy in the martyr fires he had long foreseen.

Centenaries are apt to miscarry. If such occasions serve only for the display of erudition and platform vanity, and fail to lead us to seek the essential message and the continuing inspiration of the great men they celebrate, what riches of the past remain sealed to us! There have been celebrations loudly acclaimed by men who would have bayed at the heels of the brave revolutionary whom they now eloquently praise. They simulate seeing he is no longer alive and dangerous, but a hero dead: and they join the chorus of universal praise. The effect is

to emphasize the deadness of the past, not to rekindle glorious life—this is rekindled only where there is eagerness to be in or near the succession of the great, where there is sympathy with admiration, where there is in fine some kinship of spirit.

The true aim of Centennials is more psychological than historical. Not so much the magnification of the subject as the discovery of what was his lofty purpose, his high endurance, his nobility of spirit: not even his success, but his endeavor; and this in order that in our admiration we may draw inspiration for ourselves and emulate his spirit in the altered circumstances of the time. That resolve to recapture for the world of to-day a courage and a consecration of which the world of his day was contemptuous, and to devote these invaluable virtues to the opportunities of our time—that is the soul-stirring aim in revivifying the past; and is not that the true heritage of all the ages?

CHAPTER I.

CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND

CAN we picture to ourselves the world in which Tindale gradually came into public view, made his voice heard in palaces, manor houses and homes of the common people; making enemies rage, but winning friends innumerable, until finally a price was set on his head: and there were Englishmen eager to entrap him to his death?

What was the condition of England then? What figures stand out conspicuous in the life of the nation? In whose hands did administrative power lie? In what directions were events moving? In the forefront of the nation strode Wolsey, clothed with power, dominating every avenue of corporate action, the master of church and state, and irresistible so long as he could retain the indulgence of the king. It was the time when Wolsey

had succeeded in substituting royal despotism for quasi-representative government, and had himself risen to giddy heights of power and affluence, only to fall headlong in infamy and remorse. His sovereign had at length turned with Tudor frenzy against his minister. The king's marriage projects, his impatience with the Cardinal's vanity, as extravagant as it was grotesque, were not the only cause for dishonor; the King had purposes which called for servants of another type, and Henry was resolved to wield the royal power alone.

Erasmus, More and Colet were the men of letters conspicuous in ability and influence during Tindale's boyhood. The three men were in intimate sympathy with one another; and each in his own fashion, exponents of the new learning, gave the country wholehearted service. All were men of outstanding talent, and labored unceasingly for the ends they had in view. Colet was the preacher of renown. His University lectures on St. Paul's Epistles were scarcely less notable than his sermons in London. Sir



DESIDERIUS ERASMUS.

After Albert Durer.

Thomas More was witty, intense, versatile, broad-minded, gifted with imagination and courage; but when he encountered the violence of Luther suddenly changed to the recusancy of the bigots and the bishops. Erasmus, the greatest of the three, never altered his plans. He held on his way alike in all weathers undeterred, enlightening his time with the treasures he had found in the New Testament. It was in the year 1516 he issued his Greek Testament, with a Latin version alongside, correcting errors in the Vulgate; and that issue was a landmark in the history of the whole of Europe.

These three men incensed the conservatism of the Church. They refused to shut their eyes to the prevalent ignorance and unworthiness of the priesthood. They laid bare the open sores in the body ecclesiastic. Their irony and satire played about abbots, bishops and curés; but in all the castigation inflicted, there was no sign given by the priesthood of change or desire for reformation; only rancour and rage. As the truth got utterance given to it, the people took sides slowly, and

the tides of feeling rose and spread. Listen to one voice from the multitude:

Men hurt their souls,
Alas! for Goddes will;
Why sit ye Prelates still
And suffer all this ill?
Ye Bishops of estates
Should open broad the gates
Of your spiritual charge
And come forth at large
Like lanterns of light
In the peoples' sight
In pulpits awtentike
For the weal publyke
Of priesthood in this case.

—John Skelton.

Gloucestershire was a stronghold of the Church. The proverb "As sure as God is in Gloucester" gave point to it. Only a few of the clergy understood the Latin services they read or sang. None of them knew the contents of the Bible; and many were outspoken in their disparagement of it. When argument arose and some rare voice made reference to the Bible, they thought to silence him by saying the Pope, or this or that, was

above the Bible. It was in the course of conversation and debate that a certain man ejaculated to Tindale "We were better be without God's laws than the Pope's". The attitude is the more to be remarked because as a consequence of the new learning there had been a wide diffusion of the Bible in the Latin language (the Vulgate) since the invention of printing. No fewer than eighty editions, although one cannot ascertain what was the size of the editions, had been issued between 1462 and 1500.

As a sign of the times, this diffusion of the Latin Bible was curiously significant. Significant it was indeed in more ways than one. It showed (1) that the scholars of the church were being influenced by the new learning; but also (2) that a strict reservation was to be enforced in confining it to scholars. The Bible was for scholars, not for others. A fine instance is in the case of the Complutensian Polyglot. Complutum was the Latin name of Alcalá. In 1502 Cardinal Ximenes, the founder of Alcalá University, decided on the issue of a Polyglot edition of

the Bible wherein the Vulgate should be placed alongside of the best Hebrew and the best Greek manuscripts. "Every theologian", he said, "should also be able to drink of that water which springeth up to eternal life at the fountain head itself Our object is to revive the hitherto dormant study of the Sacred Scriptures". The very men who thus engaged in the publication of the Bible, denounced with the direst of penalties its distribution outside the charmed circle of the learned.

Freedom of conscience there was none. Tolerance was proclaimed as an emanation of Hell. Difference of opinion was deadly. To acknowledge misgiving or doubt or dissent was incontinently to be rated as a rebel and exposed to the truculency of a pitiless hierarchy.

There is a companion picture of the English world at that time, lurid and indeed sickening. The bishops sank their humanity in frenzied partisanship, gave rein to cruel and monstrous passion, aided and abetted therein by More as Lord Chancellor. They

lit the fires of Smithfield, and the spectacle of Englishmen perishing at the stake for honesty of thought and sincerity of life, became so familiar as to case-harden the people at the scenes. One story, typical of scores of others, may be given.

The story has reference to Bainham's execution: "Among the lay officials present at the stake, was 'one Pavier', town clerk of London. This Pavier was a Catholic fanatic, and as the flames were about to be kindled he burst out into violent and abusive language. The fire blazed up, and the dying sufferer, as the red flickering tongues licked the flesh from off his bones, turned to him and said, 'May God forgive thee and shew more mercy than thou, angry reviler, shewest to me.' The scene was soon over: the town clerk went home. A week after, one morning when his wife had gone to mass, he sent all his servants out of the house on one pretext or another, a single girl only being left, and he withdrew to a garret at the top of the house, which he used as an oratory. A large crucifix was on the wall; and the girl, having

some question to ask, went to the room, and found him standing before it, 'bitterly weeping'. He told her to take his sword, which was rusty, and clean it. She went away and left him; when she returned, a little time after, he was hanging from a beam, dead. He was a singular person. Edward Hall, the historian, knew him, and had heard him say, that, 'if the king put forth the New Testament in English, he would not live to bear it.' And yet he could not bear to see a heretic die. What was it? Had the meaning of that awful figure hanging on the torturing cross suddenly revealed itself? Had some inner voice asked him whether, in the prayer for his persecutors with which Christ had parted out of life, there might be some affinity with words which had lately sounded in his own ears? God, into whose hands he threw himself, self-condemned in his wretchedness, only knows the agony of that hour. Let the secret rest where it lies, and let us be thankful for ourselves that we live in a changed world."

(Froude, Henry VIII.)

When the mind pauses to reflect on this doing to death of men because their faith did not square with that of those in high places, and succeeds in freeing itself from the numbing influence which its very familiarity causes, the amazement and horror of the practice help us to measure the criminal folly of it. One must make an effort indeed to shake off that deadening influence; and then, and only then, the arrogance and impiety of claiming injustice, torture, judicial murder, as a service to God, make one shudder as at blasphemy. Yet what awful pages of history in every part of Christendom record the deeds of this sanguinary orthodoxy. How hard has mankind found it to learn that persuasion and forbearance are the real solvents of dissent; for the faith in force is hardly shaken to this day. Forcible suppression is in high favor still. It may not, dare not, perhaps, work by the same crude and sanguinary tools, although the disclosures of the Great War, or of Soviet Russia, may give the lie to that caveat: but little observation is needed to show how in

subtler forms, alike in politics and in religion, there is the same impatience with disagreeing opinion, and the same self-assurance that does not hesitate to silence a disputant by death or shame. Wherever it lifts its head, it is the head of Anti-Christ.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAKING OF TINDALE

IN such an atmosphere the formative years of Tindale's life were spent. So much can be said: but little more than that is known with any certainty. Indeed the story of his youth can be put in a single paragraph. He was a native of Gloucestershire. He was sent very young to Oxford. There he entered Magdalen Hall, attached to Magdalen College, the College of Wolsey and Lily. After graduation he went for a period to Cambridge, attracted there probably by Erasmus, who had occupied the Greek chair.

It was about the time when Erasmus gave his Greek Testament to the world. He was fulfilling his own daring ideal, very daring in those days. "I totally dissent", Erasmus said in his Exhortation, "from those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures, trans-

lated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals, as if Christ had taught such subtle doctrines that they can with difficulty be understood by a very few theologians or as if the strength of the Christian religion lay in men's ignorance of it. The mysteries of kings it were perhaps better to conceal, but Christ wishes His mysteries to be published as widely as possible. I would wish even all women to read the Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul. And I wish they were translated into all languages of all people, that they might be read and known, not merely by the Scotch and the Irish, but even by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the husbandman may sing parts of them at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveller may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way."

The very centre of the excitement it created was in Cambridge when Tindale enrolled. Many minds hungrily devoured the work. The story of Bilney, "Little Bilney" as he was affectionately called, (captivated

by the Greek Testament, a fervent disciple of the Gospel, intimidated by the terrors of the persecutor, on recantation set free, and to his honor recovering himself and courageously confessing his new faith with martyrdom before his eyes, he gave his life as a brave man should) indicated what happened to many others.

To no Cambridge student of the time had the book come more opportunely and more appropriately than to the ex-Oxford student, whose classical attainments fitted him to take from it the very fullest advantage. One of Tindale's sayings amid these surroundings was, "he had perceived by experience how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth unless the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in the mother tongue, that they see the process, the order, and the meaning of the text: which things only", he says, "moved me to translate the New Testament."

Known in both colleges as an able scholar, excelling in languages, Tindale left Cambridge and became Chaplain-Tutor in the

family of Sir John Walsh in his native county. There he continued his studies, preached frequently, and met on equal terms with the Society of the shire.

CHAPTER III.

AT LITTLE SODBURY

CHURCHMEN and gentry were frequent guests at the hospitable board. The topics agitating men's minds were often mentioned. Sometimes the conversation waxed warm. The chaplain rarely spoke, though nothing escaped his attention. It was impossible always to forbear. A question or a reflection was at times enough to draw opposition. Indeed the relevancy and significance of his words challenged his listener.

Tindale felt himself alone. He was not sure of the sympathies of his host: his hostess thought him presumptuous in holding his opinion against the company. The atmosphere was often unfriendly.

In Foxe's "Acts and Monuments" we have recorded the testimony of one who probably

got the facts from Tindale himself. Describing such table talk, he adds: "Wherein as those men and Master Tindale did vary in opinions and judgments, then Master Tindale would shew them on the book the places by open and manifest Scripture; the which continued for a certain season divers and sundry times, until in the continuance thereof those great beneficed doctors waxed weary and bore a secret grudge in their hearts against Master Tindale".

(Demaus' "Life of Tindale" page 67.)

It was in the course of a conversation of the kind that Tindale drove one of those learned men to exclaim that the Pope's laws were above all other authority; to which came Tindale's reply, impetuous and defiant: "I defy the Pope and his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I shall cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest." (page 86 ib.)

Students of that age have been struck by the co-incidence of this anticipation of Tindale's and the prediction of Erasmus in the passage where the latter records his emphatic

dissent from those who were unwilling to have the Scriptures translated into the vulgar tongue and read by private individuals.

The coincidence is a striking one. It may well be that the daring of the Dutch man of letters smote a responsive chord in the breast of the brave Englishman. If the younger catches the torch from the hand of his precursor, must we disparage the courage with which the torch is carried forward and kept ablaze?

From Foxe again we take the picture of a little domestic scene, very realistic, wherein the lady of the house occupies the centre. "So upon a time some of those beneficed doctors had Master Walsh and the lady his wife, at a supper or banquet, there having among them talk at will without any gain-saying: and the supper or banquet being done, and Master Walsh and the lady his wife come home, they called for Master Tindale, and talked with him of such communication as had been, where they come fro (from), and of their opinions. Master Tindale there-

unto made answer agreeable to the truth of God's word, and in reprovng of their false opinions. The Lady Walsh, being a stout woman, and as Master Tindale did report her to be wise, being there no more but they three, Master Walsh, his wife and Master Tindale; 'Well,' said she, 'there was such a doctor, he may dispend (spend) two hundred pounds by the year, another one hundred pound, and another three hundred pound; and what think ye, were it reason that we should believe you before them so great, learned and beneficed men?' Master Tindale, hearing her, gave her no answer; nor after that had but small arguments against such, for he perceived it would not help in effect to the contrary."

Tindale had the good sense to know how vain would be argument with his disputant. He found another way. Ere long both Sir John and his lady took their stand firmly by his side.

CHAPTER IV.

IN LONDON

TINDALE'S residence at Little Sodbury ended when he saw that his remaining there must bring trouble upon the inmates of the Manor House. He resolved to move to London, and hoped that he might be enabled there to accomplish the task he had set himself as his life work. His hopes were centred on the then Bishop of London. Tunstal was a friend of the new learning. He was able, ambitious, liberal, and a Prelate of rising power. If he gave his countenance to Tindale's enterprise, its completion and publication were assured.

Even with introductions it was not easy to gain an audience. An unknown university man was easily overlooked by this busy man of the world. At length, however, an interview took place. It was constrained. The

polished ecclesiastic was frigid and reserved. He did nothing to put his visitor at ease. Tindale's request for Episcopal countenance received no encouragement.

That interview was one of the great moments of history nevertheless. It proved a turning point in the life of the ardent student. It might have been the dawn of a splendid era in the history of England.

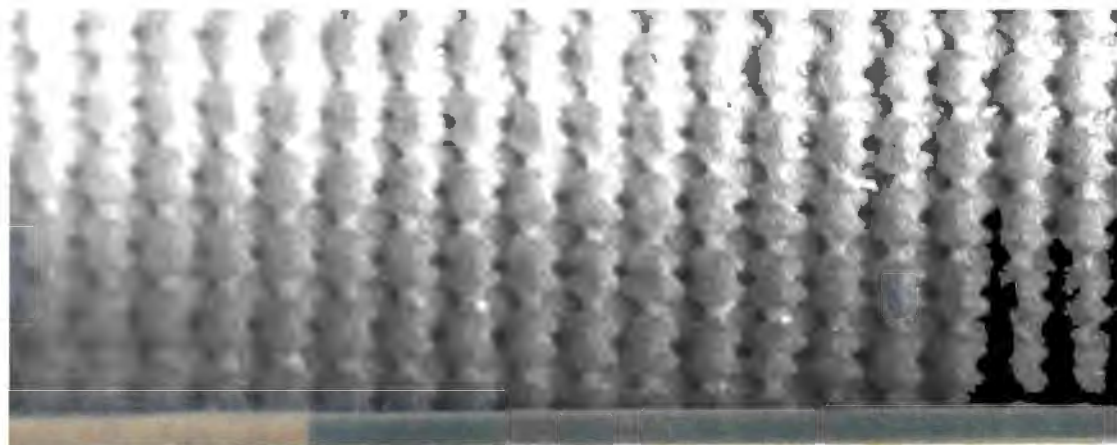
His failure with the Prelate, however, was really his good fortune. It strengthened for him the friendship of one of the most notable men in London. Mr. Humphrey Monmouth was a wealthy wool merchant, an alderman of the city, of liberal mind and cultured taste and generous disposition. An extensive traveller, personally acquainted with parts of the world rarely visited at that time, and having business connections with many lands, he enriched the scholar by a friendship that was beyond price. Tindale became a member of the merchant's family for six months, enjoyed the varied intercourse which the hospitable table of the house afforded, and pursued his studies with characteristic in-

dustury. It is very probable that his host's knowledge and acquaintance with the continental countries, and particularly with the Low Countries, helped to determine Tindale's departure from London when it seemed plain that there was no place in all England where he could be sure he could carry out the great work his heart was set on doing.

This friendship brought down upon Monmouth the wrath of the authorities. He was thrown into the Tower. To obtain his release he made an appeal to Wolsey. That appeal has been preserved. In simple matter of fact terms it narrates his intercourse with his whilom guest. It enables us to see the reformer through another's eyes. "I heard (Tindale) preach," he writes, "two or three sermons in St. Dunstan's in the West in London, and after that I chanced to meet him, and with communication I learned what living he had. He said he had none at all, but he trusted to be with My Lord of London in his service; and therefore I had the better fantasy (fancy) to him. Afterward (when this hope failed him) he came to me again

and besought me to help him; and so I took him into my household and there he lived like a good priest as methought. He studied most part of the day and the night at his book; and he would eat but sodden meat by his good will, nor drink but small single beer. I never saw him wear linen about him in the space he was with me. I did promise him ten pounds sterling to pray for my father and mother their souls and all Christian souls. I did pay him when he made his exchange to Hamburg.”

We are to remember that in 1384, a hundred and fifty years before the time of which we are speaking, Wyclif had translated the Bible into English. It was not until 1477 that the invention of printing was introduced into England: but manuscript copies were made in considerable numbers. There were many willing copyists. Nearly two hundred copies survived in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Yet in Tindale’s time there is not a sign that any such translation was in existence. Many English people must have had them in possession; but contemporary



IN LONDON

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life and records rarely show a trace of them, or of any readers turning over their pages in secret.

So complete had been the reaction from the joys of first possession; so complete had been the success of the prelates' policy in silencing the Lollard preaching, and in putting out of sight their Bible in the mother tongue.

It is almost certain that Tindale had a copy of Wyclif's version: if so, it is certain he would use it for comparison, as he used every text within his reach. Some have overstated this debt to Wyclif. Tindale's own words are emphatic, that his translation is his own. There was no version he could take as model.

CHAPTER V.

IN EXILE; (1) INTERCOURSE WITH LUTHER

EXILE by force of circumstance is a sorrow many have endured. To the ardent patriot who sees with far-seeing eye his country's destiny, and who feels he could and will make some contribution to the general good, it is an endless sorrow. Tindale's intense love of country, his high fortitude in the mission he had accepted for himself, his clear vision of the blessing to England the Bible in the native tongue must bring, the unintelligent opposition and hostility obstructing and thwarting his work, in the end menacing his life, made existence for him a prolonged martyrdom. The pathos of his last words echoes all that he endured: "Lord open the King of England's eyes."

Tindale and Luther were contemporaries. Their resemblances were as pronounced as their contrasts. Both were apostles of the Word of God. Their own discoveries of its experimental power made reserve or silence impossible. Of their native speech they had so perfect a mastery that it is not too much to say of each of them that their translations were the moulds which determined the ultimate development of their native tongues; and each felt so powerfully the vital value of the revelation as to stamp their translations indelibly with the fire of their own faith. Life-blood flowed in their versions. It was the surge of this personal emotion in their versions which made them the possession not merely of their own generations, but of the four centuries that have followed.

They differed in manner more than in spirit or in purpose. There was a violence in Luther uncontrolled, whose outbursts gave such mortal offence to Sir Thomas More as to swing him from his humanistic broad-mindedness to a spirit of intolerance hardly less fiery than Luther's violence. Fires prob-

ably of equal intensity burned in Tindale: he could say things that scarified—many of his “pestilent glosses” stung and burned beyond endurance; but Tindale was always master of his powers.

Controversy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries was carried on in language laden with poison. The fumes of it got into the heads of all protagonists, the noblest not excepted. Humor, the best of antidotes, did not completely save Erasmus from its venom. The ink of Luther’s pen often spluttered with it. Tindale himself was not immune. In some of his glosses there are phrases that burn and blister.

The reader of these modern times cannot help feeling that this flaws noble character; but judgment cannot overlook the manner of the times, nor demand that Tindale be unaffected by a malady that was then everywhere endemic.

The tempestuous soul of the German could not fail to influence the more phlegmatic Englishman. Traces of Luther’s influence abound in Tindale’s work; but have never

overlain the independence and original energy of the latter. It is one of the great merits of the English reformer, that, man of original power as he was, he laid under contribution all available knowledge and experience in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, Spanish, Italian, in determining what his own translation must be.

That these outstanding reformers met together, more than once, is duly recorded; but descriptive account of their intercourse there is none. So far as their history is concerned, they are to us like "Ships that pass in the night." They speak one another and pass in the dark.

If we could recover their table talk, we should prize it, not only for its own sake, but for the revelation it must make of both men. One wonders whether it was to Tindale that Luther, realizing sadly how each of them had been forced by circumstances to do his work in lonely peril, declared "Interpreters and translators should not work alone, for good et propria verba do not always occur to one mind:"—or again: "My counsel is that

we draw water from the true source and fountain, that is, that we diligently search the Scriptures one single verse, one sentence of the text, is of far more instruction than a whole host of glosses and commentaries, which are neither strongly penetrating nor armour of proof.”

Luther's country had proved a safe asylum for the English translator. Cochlaeus was one of many of their enemies in common; but his battery had been unmasked. The friends surely drew together as they found themselves facing similar dangers day by day, and both of them rode on those tossing seas confidently anchored in the promises of God.

CHAPTER VI.

IN EXILE: (2) TRANSLATING THE NEW TESTAMENT

TINDALE'S life upon the Continent of Europe can be traced in no more than broken outline. Gaps of space and time are frequent; for, as already indicated, whatever letters or other documents there may have been have long ago disappeared, and we have little more than knowledge of extended residence at certain important points, Hamburg, Cologne, Worms, and shorter visits to the Wartburg, Wittenberg, Antwerp, etc. As Froude aptly says: "His history is the history of his work, and his epitaph is the Reformation."

It was in Worms that the famous diet had been held at which Luther braved the Empire in its assembled might, and here it is that Rietschel's monument to the Reformation stands in bronze and granite. Colossal

figures, Waldo and Wyclif, Huss and Savonarola, have towering above them the figure of Luther, his right hand clenched and resting on the Bible. Bas-reliefs and medallions carry select details. Where selection was imperative, there could not fail to be regrettable omissions; but one misses also forces that were vital. Gutenberg is not there; nor any symbol of his craft.

Without the service rendered by the printing press of recent invention, it is almost inconceivable that there could have been any such world-shaking event as the Reformation proved. Not only was the burning eloquence of the preacher carried by this means far and wide, but the Scriptures themselves in the language of the people were thrown off from scores of presses in the Rhine Valley and dispersed to many lands. Like wildfire knowledge ran.

Gutenberg, and Fust with Schoeffer in Maintz, Quentel and Bryckmann in Cologne, were the names most frequent on the title pages of the Bible; and their fame has proved enduring.

In the early decades of the Sixteenth Century, even in Germany printing was still regarded as one of the marvels of the time. But in England, the first quarter of the century had just ended when the authorities took alarm at its power and sought to curb it. They instituted a censorship to kill it. Its development was persistently thwarted for many years.

Well did Tindale understand that the English government not merely forbade the translation of the Bible into the native tongue, but were trying to strangle the printing craft in its infancy.

Out of England the trade was prospering at many centres.

He landed at Hamburg. Even then the city was a busy commercial centre with business and shipping interests linking it with every part of the commercial world. Among the inhabitants were men who welcomed Tindale and who gave him assistance in various ways. But he was soon aware that for his work one essential was lacking. Not a single printing press had been set up

in Hamburg as yet. His acquaintance with Hamburg, however, was of enduring value. The friends he made there he retained, and later visits were a solace and encouragement in days when friends were friends indeed.

He proceeded to Cologne, where there was every facility for printing. He had the first parts of the New Testament in 4to. ready for the press. Enemies, however, were around and alert. Circumspection and secrecy were essential. The work progressed. The printer had got as far as the first ten sheets when a restless and resolute enemy, Cochlaeus, having ferreted the secret from one of the workmen in his cups, obtained authority to put a stop to the work. Tindale managed to secure his property and left the city. He escaped up the Rhine to safety in the city of Worms; where reformation was in power, and where he could continue his work with new feelings of security.

Here, then, he lost no time in resuming his work.

He found a sympathetic printer in P.

The fyrst pistle off

S. Peter the

Apostle.



The fyrst Chapter.

Peter an Apostle of Jesu Christ / to the that dwell here
and there as straungers thorow
out / Pontus / Galacia / Capa
docia / Asia / and Betherinia / elec
t by the foreknowledge off God

the father / thorow the sanctifyinge off the spaci
te / vnto obedience and spaynflynge of the blood
off Jesus Christ. Grace be with you / and pes
ace be multiplied.

Blessed be God the father off oure lordes Jese
us Christ / which thorow his abundant mer
cie begat vs agayne vnto a lively hope / by the re
surreccion off Jesus Christ from deeth / to enioy
ye an inheritaunce immortall / and vndefiled /
and that puttifieth not / reserved in heve for you
which are kept by the power off god thorow fa
yth / vnto helth / which health is prepared all ree
dy to be shewed i the last tyme / in the which tyme
ye shall reioyce / though nowe for a seasō (iff nes
de requirte) ye are in hevines / throue manyfolds
detempracions / that youre fayth once tried bes
ynge moche more precious then golde that peris
sheth (though it be tried wyth fyre) myght be
founde vnto lawde / glory / and honowre / when
Jesus Christ shall apere / whom ye have not seene

Schoeffer. Tindale appears to have rearranged his plans. Possibly he had ascertained that Cochlaeus, balked of victory at the very last, had with vindictive cunning sent letters to England giving full particulars of the kind of volume that was in the making: (It was to be a 4to. with notes and comments) and urging the authorities to guard against its being smuggled into the country. Tindale forestalled that enemy. It was not a 4to. volume which he now designed at Worms, but an 8vo. volume; and this had neither note nor gloss. It would seem that alongside of this, but at more leisurely pace, the 4to. also was completed, very likely in the same printing house. Both volumes bear the stamp of the same year of issue, 1525. The two editions were successfully conveyed to England; so that the immediate effect of the attack was to issue two editions instead of one—6,000 volumes instead of 3,000. A skilful system of Colportage carried these books all over England. Before the books arrived, the King had a second warning. Edward Lee,

afterwards Archbishop of York, was then on the Continent, and dating his letter from Bordeaux, December 2nd, 1525, he says: "Please it Your Highness to understand that I am certainly informed as I passed in this country that an Englishman, your subject, at the solicitation and instance of Luther with whom he is, hath translated the New Testament into English, and within a few days intendeth to arrive with the same imprinted in England. I need not to advertize Your Grace what infection and danger may ensue hereby if he be not withstanded. This is the next way to fulfil your realm with Lutherians." Then he adds: "All our forefathers, Governors of the Church of England, hath with all diligence, forbid and eschewed publication of English Bibles, as appeareth in Constitutions Provincial of the Church of England."

The news had travelled far before reaching Lee, and was inaccurate at that: but the swiftness with which it reached him was proof of the excitement which Cochlaeus' discovery had created.

More interesting and more accurate is a notice which occurs in the diary of a German scholar,* some four months earlier in time. He says: "One told us at the dinner table that 6,000 copies of the English Testament had been printed at Worms: that it was translated by an Englishman who lived there with two of his countrymen. He was so complete a master of seven languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English and French—that you would fancy whichever one he spoke was his mother tongue." He adds that the English, in spite of the opposition of the King, were so eager for the Gospel, as to affirm they would buy a New Testament even if they had to give a hundred thousand pieces of money for it.

While the enemy raged, the presses abroad were not idle. Additional editions were printed to take the place of those destroyed. They were conveyed with the same success to English ports. In less than five years six editions had been published, three of them surreptitiously. They numbered perhaps fifteen thousand copies in all, and were dis-

*Buschius (Herman von dem Busche).

tributed to eager purchasers by the same formidable organization of colportage.

Nor was Tindale idle. He had foreseen the tactics of his foes. He kept steadfastly at work. He revised his translation of the New Testament, and he proceeded to turn the Old Testament into the English speech; the Pentateuch, the historical books as far as Chronicles, the book of Jonah he completed. In 1536 he was able to send the manuscript of his revised New Testament to England, and there it was put upon the press. That was the first volume of Holy Scripture to be printed on English soil.

It was, however, the closing year of Tindale's life. Before the book came off the press he may have sealed his testimony; but at least he would be cheered by tidings of its progress, and the knowledge that the work had found its proper home in his own land. "For this end", says Westcott, "he had constantly striven; for this he had been prepared to sacrifice everything else; and the end was gained only when he was called to die."

The Revelacion

The. viii
figure.



are with out spott before the trone of god. And I sawe an angell flye in the myddes of heven harpyng an everlastyng gospell/ to preache vnto them that sitt and dwell on the erth/ and to all nacions/ kinreddes/ and tonge and people sayinge with a lowde voyce/ feare God and geve honour to him/ for the houre of his iudgement is come/ and worshyppe him/ acc. viiiij. that made heven and erth/ & the see/ and foun-
taynes

Some time elapsed before the discovery of the contraband Testament was made by the ecclesiastical authorities, who then instituted a search so bitterly persistent and so pervasive in its continuance, that, of these editions, there survive in our time only a couple of 8vo. copies, one of these incomplete; and only a fragmentary copy of the 4to. The eventual destruction, however, did not prevent the Testament meanwhile having its own influence and bringing comfort and hope to thousands of English homes.

Not only so,—and this is the tribute that is due to Tindale's translation,—the translation as Tindale made it is in substance and form the English New Testament as we have it to-day. Notwithstanding the numberless revisions that have taken place, it is substantially Tindale's translation still; for the revisers have always, unconsciously perhaps, done their revising in the spirit and manner of Tindale. Of all that have worked upon the English Bible, no other single man has left his mark on this book; the version in our

hands to-day bears the unmistakable stamp of its first translator.

“The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it—the mingled tenderness and majesty—the Saxon simplicity—the preternatural grandeur—unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars,—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man—William Tindale. Lying, while engaged in that great office, under the shadow of death, the sword above his head and ready at any moment to fall, he worked, under circumstances alone perhaps truly worthy of the task which was laid upon him,—his spirit, as it were divorced from the world, moved in a purer element than common air.”

(Froude, Henry Eighth, Vol. II).

The contents of this book as it passed into the hands of the nation, printed not in the language of the court, nor in that of either the statesman or the scholar, but in the language of the common people, finding

them, as it did, more especially at critical times when events seemed to be threatening the overthrow of the nation as much as of the individual, stole into the imagination of the people, and by degrees gave form and life to those great virtues, justice, freedom, truth, tolerance and self-sacrifice, which have become the vivid traditions that govern in the main the English-speaking people. Here was the fountain head from which the main stream of their literature, legislation, public policy, and national character derives its flow and power.

For it is admitted that the distinction of this great people from other nations in a certain generosity, patience, integrity and courage, rests remotely on their silent appropriation of the vital forces released in this book of God.

Such far-reaching consequences afford the best measure of the immense significance—much greater than he could foresee—of Tindale's toil that he might open the eyes of England to the message he succeeded in

turning into imperishable language understood of the people.

No phase of Tindale's work intrigues the student so much as his perfect command of his native tongue. Where and how did he acquire this mastery of pure sonorous English, whose rhythmic prose is like stately music to the most cultured ear? Study of the Vulgate and of the originals he worked on has not indeed to be overlooked as a possible source; but there is a gift, native-born, or acquired in secret toil, which, with those tides of devout feeling we find swelling in the man himself, stamps the style as the organ utterance of his consecrated manhood.

Tindale's rendering of 1 Cor. 13, with the parallels for comparison of Wyclif and the Authorized Version of 1611, illustrates both the style of the great translator and the permanence of his translation in the version current for four hundred years.

WYCLIF—1380

If I speke with tungis of men and of aungels, and I haue not charite, I am made

as bras sownynge or a cymbal tinkynge, and if I haue profecie, and knowe alle mysteries, and al kynnyng, and if I haue al feith so that I meue hillis fro her place and I haue not charite I am nouzt, and if I departe alle my godis in to metis of pore men, and if I bitake my bodi so that I brenne, and I haue not charite if profetith to me no thing, charite is pacient, it is benyngne.

charite enuyeth not, it doth not wickidli it is not blowun it is not coueitous, it sekith not the thngis that ben his owne, it is not stired to wraththe, it thenkith not yuel, it ioieth not on wickidnesse, but it ioieth to gidre to truthe, it suffrith alle thingis: it beleueth alle thingis, it hopith alle thingis it susteyneth alle thingis, charite fallith neuer down, whether profecies schuln be voidid, ether langagis schulen cease: ether science schal be distried,

for aparti we knowen and aparti we profecien, but whanne that schal come that is perfizt, that thing that is of parti schal be avoidid, whanne I was a litil child, I thouzt as a litil child, but whanne I was made a man I

voidid tho thingis that weren of a litil child,
and we seen now bi a myrrour in derknesse:
but thanne face to face, now I knowe of parti,
but thanne I schal knowe as I am knowen,
and now dwellen feith hope and charite these
thre: but the moost of thes is charite.

TYNDALE—1536

Though I spake with the tonges of men
and angels, and yet had no love, I were even
as soundings brasse: or as a tynklynge
Cymball. And though I coulde prophesy,
and vnderstode all secretes, and all knowl-
edge: yee, yf I had all fayth so that I coulde
move mountayns oute of ther places, and yet
had no love, I were nothyng. And though I
bestowed all my gooddes to fede the poore,
and though I gave my body even that I
burned, and yet had no love, it profeteth me
nothyng. Love suffreth longe, and is
cirteous. Love envieth not. Love doth nor
frowardly, swelleth not dealeth not dis-
honestly, seeketh not her awne is not pro-
voked to anger, thynketh not evyll, reioyseth
not in iniquite: but reioyseth in the trueth,

suffreth all thynges, beleveth all thynges, hopeth all thynges, endureth in all thynges. Though that prophesyng fayle, other tonges shall cease, or knowledge vanysshe awaye, yet love falleth never awaye.

For oure knowledge is vnperfect, and oure prophesyng is vnperfect. But when that which is perfect is come, than that which is vnperfect shall be done awaye.

When I was a chylde, I spake as a chylde, I vnderstode as a chylde I ymagened as a chylde. But assone as I was a man, I put awaye childesshnes. Now we se in a glasse even in a darke speakynge: but then shall we se face to face. Now I knowe unperfectly: but then shall I knowe even as I am known. Now abideth fayth, hope, and love, even these thre: but the chief of these is love.

AUTHORIZED—1611

Though I speake with the tongues of men and of Angels, and haue not charity, I am become as sounding brasse or a tinkling cymbal. And though I haue the gift of prophesie, and vnderstand all mysteries and

all knowledge: and though I haue all faith, so that I could remooue mountains, and haue no charitie, I am nothing. And though I bestowe all my goods to feede the poore, and though I giue my body to bee burned, and haue not charitie, it profiteth me nothing. Charitie suffereth long, and is kinde: charitie enuieth not: charitie vaunteth not it selfe, is not puffed vp, Doeth not behaue it selfe unseemly, seeketh not her owne, is not easily prouoked, thinketh no euill, Reioyceth not in iniquitie, but reioyceth in the trueth: Beareth all things, beleeueth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charitie neuer faileth: but whether there be propheties, they shall faile; whether there bee tongues, they shall cease; whether there bee knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesie in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part, shall be done away. When I was a childe, I spake as a childe, I vnderstood as a childe, I thought as a childe: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glasse darkely: but

then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know euen as also I am knowen. And now abideth faith, hope, charitie, these three, but the greatest of these is charitie.

CHAPTER VII.

PERSONALITY

WE have cited the happy epigram of the historian that Tindale's work is his history and his epitaph is the Reformation. This is just and felicitous. When he seeks a telling phrase to set forth the personality of Tindale, however, he is not happy.

He calls him "a young dreamer". As if he were dissatisfied with this, he calls him elsewhere "a fiery young enthusiast." The second is no truer than the first.

Tindale had the dream of England's greatness if her people had the Bible in their mother tongue: and to use his own words, "he encountered poverty, exile, bitter absence from friends, hunger, thirst and cold, great dangers and innumerable, hard and sharp fightings, to make his dream come true."

But "dreamer" is not the word for a life like that.

"Enthusiasm and fire", yes, these undoubtedly Tindale possessed. When copies of Tindale's Testament were bought and burnt in Antwerp, London and Oxford, his remark was: "They did none other than that I looked for; no more shall they do if they burned me also. If it be God's will it shall so be."

At one of the burnings, Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, preached against Luther. Tidings of the scene having reached Tindale, he wrote some time afterwards: "Mark, I pray you, what an orator he is, and how vehemently he persuadeth it. Martin Luther burnt the Pope's decretals; 'a manifest sign', saith he (Fisher) that he would have burned the Pope's Holiness also if he had had him.

A like argument which I suppose to be rather true, I (Tindale) make: The Pope and his holy brethren have burned Christ's Testament: an evident sign verily that they would have burnt Christ Himself if they had had Him."

But this vehemency was only part of the man. The whole man kept these inner fires aglow year after year until he had finished the work assigned to him. Even by an adversary he was called "a learned, pious, good man": his keeper, and his keeper's daughter, and others of his keeper's household were won over by him to his belief.

His was a personality rich and brave, capable of great endurance because aglow with zeal that many waters could not quench, vehement indeed against the enemy, yet a very perfect knight; with a sympathy and tenderness and faith that brought him the trust and affectionate esteem of those who came to know the man himself.

No, neither "dreamer" nor "enthusiast" holds the mirror up to this man. He was both dreamer and enthusiast, and a great deal besides. He was a man who loved. He deliberately gave his life to the accomplishing of one great task. He sacrificed everything to that. That nobleness of purpose, that fortitude in toil, that undeviating de-

votion to his single aim until he triumphed,
call for some ampler phrase in bronze:

Lofty designs must close in like effects

Loftily lying

Leave him—still loftier than the world
suspects

Living and dying.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION

ON issuing his translation, and again when sending forth his translation revised, Tindale solicited the aid of scholars in amending his version wherever they could. This was not a mere fashion of speech. It was the expression of his sincerity and his modesty. This one thing he desired, as he cared for nothing else, that the Bible in English be as perfect as possible.

Succeeding generations of scholars responded to his invitation; in a spirit like his they labored. The Bibles of Coverdale, Matthews, the Bishops; the Geneva Version and the Authorized Version, are mile-stones by the way—evidence with what ardor the work of revising and perfecting the English version was carried on age by age.

To find on the one hand this devotion in rendering the Bible into English, it is most strange on the other to find the larger vision



NORTH NIBLEY, TINDALE'S MONUMENT.

completely disappear, the larger vision of Erasmus that it should be rendered into every language. It is as if no such ideal had been conceived.

Now, three hundred years had to pass by before we find it being recovered, or before men were moved with any degree of sympathy for the ideal which the Dutch scholar had so bravely ventured to describe.

The universal destiny of the book had stirred his heart and fired his imagination: but not until the Evangelical Revival had deeply moved the people of England, and the modern Missionary Movement had come in its train did any men catch the vision of the Bible for every nation in the native speech.

“With the vision came the power”. A group of men, God-fearing and very courageous, resolved to enter upon this vast enterprise, and thus in 1804 was born the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The undertaking was greater than they could foresee. It was decried as chimerical; but month by month, year by year, they pursued their high purpose: their successors con-

tinued it, and now, 1925, when a hundred and twenty-one years have sped, the Society has published or has had in circulation the Scriptures translated into five hundred and seventy distinct languages.

Moreover in other lands the establishment of independent Bible Societies was encouraged. In the United States of America, soon after the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1816, the American Bible Society was established. Noble service has been rendered by it. It has aided in the translation and circulation of the Scriptures in 175 languages; some of which are included in the total, 570, given above.

Translation seldom fails to exact great sacrifice. Often life itself succumbs. The roll of honor is a long one, nearly every language taking its toll in one form or another. Tindale's was the first English sacrifice.

But the end, is it not worthy even at so great a price? To spell out, in the tongue they understand, to those sitting in the land of the shadow of death the tidings of Truth

and Grace; to set men free in the liberty of Christ; and to widen the bounds of His kingdom so that all nations may become His inheritance—what mission can be named so worthy of the uttermost devotion?

Much remains to be done; but if the morale of these men awaken admiration in us and we share their faith, great as is the undertaking that remains, it will be overtaken in the good providence of God.

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